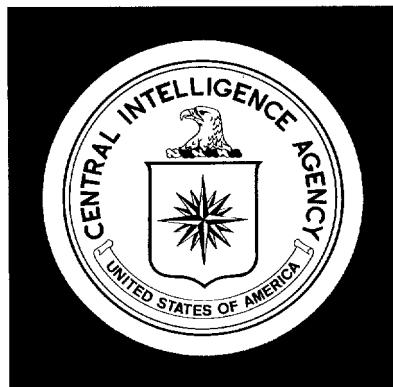


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

Secret

Nº 042

24 November 1972

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/08/05 : CIA-RDP79T00975A023200110001-1

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No. 0282/72
24 November 1972

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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ROMANIA: In forcefully restating Romania's objectives with regard to European security, President Ceausescu has taken some positions that oppose those of both the US and USSR.

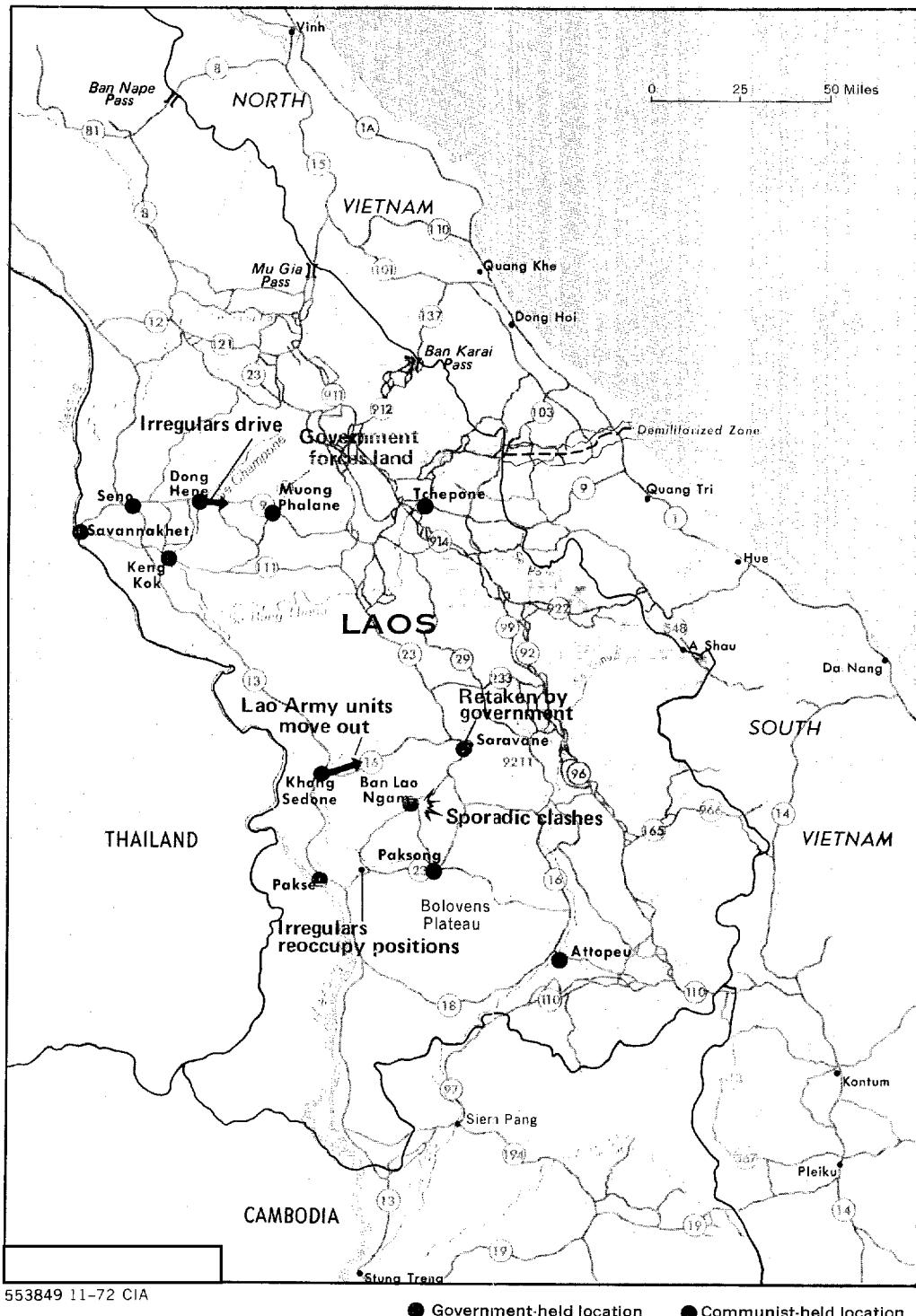
In two addresses to the party plenum on Monday and Tuesday, Ceausescu emphasized his opposition to holding talks on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) separately from CSCE. This stand reflects Romania's fear that force reduction talks without the participation of all European states would result in the formalization of the division of Europe into Soviet and US spheres of influence. Bucharest evidently fears that its freedom to maneuver, particularly in foreign affairs where it has established considerable independence, would thus be circumscribed.

The party faithful gave a ringing endorsement to Ceausescu's pledge that Romania would work in the spirit of detente to realize its goals. These include the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territories of other states, the liquidation of all foreign military bases, the creation of nuclear free zones--i.e., in the Balkans--a reduction of military budgets and an end to military maneuvers on foreign territory. The Romanians also envision the eventual dismantling of the two blocs.

Bucharest's delegation to the CSCE preparatory talks in Helsinki has given the US and other participants a set of draft principles that Romania would like to govern the talks. The proposal embodies such concepts as the equality of all the participants, the need to make most proceedings public and to reach all decisions by consensus. The fact that Bucharest took this initiative met with a "very negative" response from the Soviet delegation. The Romanians do not appear prepared to push their position to the point of disrupting the preparatory talks, but will probably promote their views behind the scene, lobbying especially for their own participation in any decision on force reductions in Europe.

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LAOS: Government forces have regained some positions in the seesaw contest for territory north of the Bolovens Plateau.

Irregular troops on 21 November moved back into Saravane, a provincial capital north of the Bolovens and are now clearing small pockets of enemy resistance from the town. Units from the North Vietnamese 968th Division drove government troops from Saravane last week, but the irregulars remained nearby and heavy air strikes on enemy positions enabled them to retake the town.

Irregular units around Ban Lao Ngam, the other government-held town in the area, continue to report only sporadic contact with small enemy units. The North Vietnamese, however, may be preparing for a new drive on the town, once an important Communist supply hub.

North of the Bolovens Plateau, Lao Army units have advanced about ten miles east of Khong Sedone without meeting any significant resistance and an irregular force has reoccupied positions at the junction of Routes 23 and 231 some 11 miles east of Pakse.

In the central panhandle, elements of a 12-battalion government force have pushed east from Dong Hene, a village captured from the Communists earlier this month, and are clearing small enemy units from villages along Route 9. Four battalions from this force were airlifted on 22 November to an area northeast of Muong Phalane, a town not far from the Ho Chi Minh logistic network. Lead units of this force have met only light opposition in moving to within three miles of Muong Phalane. 

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PAKISTAN: President Bhutto is going to greater lengths to prepare the Pakistanis for eventual recognition of Bangladesh.

Currently on a tour of the Northwest Frontier Province, Bhutto is repeatedly arguing in favor of recognition. Although he denounced the sentencing to life imprisonment this week in Dacca of the last governor of East Pakistan, A. M. Malik, Bhutto claimed that Islamabad might have been able to restrain the Bengalis if there had been contact between the two countries. His public statements favoring recognition, issued in a region where there is little objection to such a move, probably are meant primarily for the people in the important Punjab Province in which opposition is centered.

While Bhutto apparently remains adamant about the necessity of a meeting with Prime Minister Mujib before extending recognition, a modest breakthrough in relations may be seen in his agreement to repatriate some of the Bengali dependents in Pakistan. Despite Islamabad's initial rejection of an offer from India and Bangladesh on Monday to repatriate 6,000 Pakistani dependents in India, Bhutto welcomed it on Tuesday and offered to exchange 10,000 Bengali women and children from Pakistan. The confusion in the Pakistani response may have been caused by Bhutto's absence from the capital.

The repatriation offer by India and Bangladesh, although probably designed to improve the prospects for recognition, is also timed to correspond with next week's General Assembly consideration of a resolution supporting UN membership for Bangladesh. The resolution is likely to be accepted by a strong majority, but the actual membership application cannot be considered by the General Assembly until the Security Council recommends that Bangladesh be admitted. China probably will cast a veto again when the matter comes before the Council.

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BELGIUM: With the resignation of Prime Minister Eyskens and his ten-month-old Socialist-Social Christian coalition, the country will lack firm leadership at a time when important pan-European negotiations are getting under way.

Eyskens, on 22 November, carried through his threat to resign when leaders of his own Social Christian Party did not accept a compromise legislative "package" drafted by the cabinet. An old dispute concerning the administrative control of six communes along the nation's linguistic frontier plagued Eyskens' efforts to strike a compromise between the French and Dutch-speaking coalition leaders. The major stumbling block was, in all likelihood, the territorial definition of Brussels. French-speaking Socialist leaders have argued that if Eyskens' program of economic regionalization of the country is to be implemented, the economic region for Brussels must be defined in broader terms than the present linguistic laws state. Flemish politicians, who are extremely sensitive on such issues, are resisting any expansion of this largely French-speaking enclave.

Although the cabinet will probably accept the King's invitation to continue in a caretaker capacity, efforts to form a new government will be complicated. The recently revised constitution requires that Belgian governments have special, large majorities for any legislation affecting cultural and linguistic affairs. Some observers believe that Dutch-speaking members of the badly divided opposition Liberal Party might join the former coalition parties in a government to give them the extra strength needed to pass the pending legislation. The Socialists, who accepted Eyskens' compromise solution, are opposed to the idea, however, probably believing that the addition of any more Flemish deputies to the coalition would break the limits of their tolerance. Eyskens' departure makes

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Cmatters all the more difficult; no other potential coalition leader enjoys his non-partisan appeal or talent for moderation.

New elections, for the moment, are not being seriously considered. All politicians are aware that elections would not resolve the problem. Polls taken last month indicate that there would be no significant change in party alignment in parliament. The largest gains would be recorded by those casting blank or invalid ballots. The magnitude of apathy among the voters is not lost upon the more astute Belgian politicians.

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